

Culture group wants more funding for arts First draft of plan for S.A. offers 44 recommendations.

Mike Greenberg EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

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The first draft of a cultural plan for San Antonio strongly stresses the "**creative economy**," urban design and planning issues and proposes additional tax support for cultural activities. Dubbed the Cultural Collaborative, the planning process began a year ago with a daylong conference that drew several hundred participants.

Only about 50 showed up for the presentation of the draft report Monday at McAllister Auditorium. Consultant David Plettner of the Los Angeles-based Cultural+Planning Group briefly presented some key points of the draft, which he emphasized would change before reaching final form next month. Most of Monday's two-hour session was devoted to responses from attendees.

The report offers 44 recommendations, including increasing the percentage of hotel occupancy taxes that go to the arts - currently about 8 percent, though state law allows up to 15 percent. The report also urges the city to "develop a new, dedicated tax-based revenue stream for arts and culture."

Plettner cited Denver and Salt Lake City as two places where voters had approved a regional sales tax dedicated to the arts.

Among the other recommendations:

- *The city should establish a capital fund and provide matching grants to arts organizations for the construction and renovation of cultural facilities, and for their operating endowments.

- *The city should consider a bond issue to "address deferred maintenance and capital improvement of city-owned cultural facilities."

- *The city should "explore the creation or further development of cultural districts." Plettner said mixed-use zoning and development incentives might be needed in order to foster such districts, which typically combine commercial, retail, residential and cultural uses in close proximity.

- *The city should "develop an urban design master plan," including an "inventory of artistic and aesthetic assets in San Antonio's downtown and selected neighborhoods to inform local urban design decisions."

- *The city should offer fellowships for artists.

- *The city's Office of Cultural Affairs should have more staff positions, to deal with education and "cultural and heritage tourism."

Several participants urged the plan to pay greater attention to digital media, the potential of broadband Internet and the close relationship between the arts and science and technology. Others noted a need for cultural venues outside of Loop 410, for more outreach to the East Side and the African American community, for recognition of the hip-hop youth culture and of the region's cowboy heritage, and for support for local filmmakers.

The full draft is to be posted today on the Web site of the Office of Cultural Affairs at www.sanantonio.gov/art/website.

mgreenberg@express-news.net